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ABSTRACT

Written school board policies can demonstrate that boards welcome ideas from the people, that there are proper procedures for getting a hearing on complaints, and that staff and curriculum will be protected from pressure. The sample school board policies, administrative rules, and information statements in this kit are intended to facilitate the task of developing good procedure in several pertinent policy areas -- the handling of complaints, the teaching of controversial issues, and academic freedom. Criteria for evaluating a board's responsiveness to the community, suggested forms for reconsideration of books or social studies materials, and a guide to further reading are also provided. (Author/JF)

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Policies for Coping With the Critics

Cat. No. 70-60

December, 1970

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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EA 003 274

...a school board policy development kit prepared by the Educational Policies Service of the National School Boards Association

NSBA

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the School Board Policy Development Kits...

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POLICIES FOR COPING WITH THE CRITICS

Cat. No. 70-60 *December, 1970*

"Of all the agencies devised by Americans for the guiding of their public affairs, few take office in such resounding apathy as the school board, --and none other is capable of stirring up the passions of a community to so fine a froth."-- Robert S. Bendiner in The Politics of Schools.

Dear Colleague:

"Censure is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent." So said Jonathan Swift more than 250 years ago.

His observation applies to local school board members as well as to mayors, assemblymen, governors, congressmen, senators, and anyone else who assumes a leadership position in our society.

Great statesmen and politicians have always recognized this fact of public life.

* Said Winston Churchill: "I do not resent criticism--even when for the sake of emphasis it parts for the time with reality."

* Said Dwight Eisenhower: "Without exhaustive debate, even heated debate, free government would weaken and wither."

* Said Harry Truman: "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

The public schools have always had their critics. The problem in today's tumultous political and social climate is that the

critics have multiplied, their voices have become angrier, and their demands have become more and more difficult to reconcile to everyone's satisfaction.

Who Are the Critics?

Who are today's critics, and what do they want?

Their ranks include those who cry that schools are too costly, and those who advocate more spending for education. They include those who say schools are too permissive, too experimental, and too frilly, and those who charge that schools are backward, restrictive, and hidebound. They include those who want sex education courses, and those who don't; those who want busing programs, and those who don't; those who want prayer in the schools, and those who don't. They include perennial would-be book censors. They include right-wing extremists who can spot a communist conspiracy in any curriculum guide, and they include left-wing extremists who would like to see the schools become instruments of revolution.

"If you are out to beat a dog," goes an old Jewish proverb, "you can surely find a stick." For those who care to carp, it is easy enough to find a stick to use on the institution of the public schools. In fact, says Robert Bendiner, it is an "old American tradition" to blame education for almost anything that's wrong with the society-at-large. It might as well be recognized that school boards always have been and always will be called upon to play the uncomfortable role of whipping boy from time to time.

There is some consolation in knowing that the phenomenon is not altogether bad. Consider, for example, this opinion from New Dimensions in School Board Leadership, a seminar report published in 1969 by the National School Boards Association.

> A place to ventilate anger is useful and necessary in a heated up society like ours. Regardless of how tough it is to take personally, it is clearly better for an outraged citizens group to yell "Bubblehead!" at the school board than to vent its anger in street violence. The slings and arrows will come. Chances are always excellent that some faction in the community will always be angry at the school board about something.

The Rights of the Critics

The school board's major function is not, of course, simply to serve as a target for flack. Its central mission is to provide the best possible educational programs for the community's children and youth. To do this the school board must maintain all

kinds of pipelines of communication between itself and the public. It must be attuned to the values and desires of all the community's people, not just the predominate middle class. It must be able to mobilize as many people and groups as possible in order to work for solutions to the community's educational problems. All this requires that school board members be able to identify responsible and valid criticism and channel it to productive uses.

In considering policies for coping with the critics, it is imperative that school boards always respect the right of the people to question their public officials and to level criticism whenever they see fit.

Criticism is vital to the democratic process. The public schools belong to the people. The educational system--as does any other social institution--needs and is nourished by constant criticism and evaluation. Criticism of the schools, even when ill-informed or ill-advised, is an expression of free speech. No aspect of education can properly be hidden or put behond the range of examination or disagreement. And school boards should indeed encourage their constituents to learn all they can about the schools and to make suggestions for improvement any time.

However, school boards also have a very real obligation to protect their staffs when they are attacked unfairly and to make sure that their employees--from superintendent on down--are free to carry on their work without fear of outside meddling or dictation. School boards have an obligation, too, to safeguard the integrity of the curriculum despite the fact that some people some of the time may not like some of the teaching methods or some of the instructional materials.

Aids for Policy Development

By getting their policies down in writing school boards can demonstrate to all that they welcome ideas from the people, that there are proper procedures for getting a hearing on complaints, and that staff and curriculum will be protected from willy-nilly pressure. The sample school board policies, administrative rules, and information statements in this kit are intended to facilitate the task of developing good procedure in the several pertinent policy areas--the handling of complaints, the teaching of controversial issues, academic freedom, etc. In addition, we would suggest that school administrators acquire as a supplement to these exhibits a copy of Freedom to Learn and Freedom to Teach, the statement of policy in booklet form developed by the Board of Education in Wilmington, Del. (See reading list, back page.)

Particularly interesting in the Wilmington statement is this itemization of the citizen's rights and responsibilities:

* The citizen has a right to expect the impartial presentation of controversial issues, but not the right to suppress the study of those issues on which he has strong convictions.

* He has the right to secure information from school officials.

* And he has the right to file a formal protest and seek satisfaction through established channels.

The policy also describes the Review Committee mechanism used in Wilmington to provide responsible recommendations to the administration and/or board for ultimate action.

. . . . .

As indicated above, criticism is inevitable for anyone holding public office. Wise school boards prepare for the inevitable. Getting sound, effective, and fair procedures down in writing --and disseminating this information to all concerned--is a vital part of this preparation.

Good luck!

--William E. Dickinson
Director, EPS/NSBA

EPS/NSBA File: IKB

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES
(Policies should protect staff against "unjust reprisal.")

Factual materials relating to both sides of controversial issues of local, state, national, and international importance should be presented in classrooms, unless such presentation is forbidden by law. School administrators and teaching personnel should be required to exert their most conscientious efforts to present such facts objectively and impartially and local school boards should establish policies which will protect such efforts against unjust reprisal.

SOURCE: Beliefs and Policies of the National School Boards Association
DATE: March 30-April 2, 1968

EPS/NSBA File: KA

PUBLIC RELATIONS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Board of Education, in an effort to ensure and enhance the possibilities for excellence in the education of our children in a free society, presents and endorses this statement of policy on school and community relations because of its conviction that (a) the public schools belong in every sense to the people who created them by consent, and support them by taxation; (b) the schools are only as strong as the intelligent and informed support of the people of the community, and never any stronger; and (c) the support of the people must be based upon their knowledge of, their understanding about, and their participation in the aims and efforts of the public schools.

The Board therefore reaffirms and declares its design and intent

--to keep the citizens of the district regularly and thoroughly informed through all the channels of communication on all the policies, programs, problems, and planning of the school system, and to carry out this policy through its own efforts and the offices of the superintendent of schools and the director of school-community relations

--to invite the advice and counsel of the people of the school district at all times and especially at all monthly meetings of the Board, except at executive sessions

--and to solicit the sound thinking and studied counsels of the people through advisory committees selected from the community and appointed by this Board to consider those problems which vitally affect the future of our children.

SOURCE: Port Huron Area School District, Port Huron, Mich.

NOTE: This statement also appears as the sample "umbrella" policy in Kit #70-27, Policies That Support Better School Public Relations.

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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN DECISIONMAKING
(Criteria for Evaluating Board's Responsiveness to Community)

Inferior

The board generally acts without reference to community thinking, but sometimes responds to the undesirable influences of pressure groups. Citizens committees are not appointed, and public hearings are not held unless required by law. Complaints and petitions concerning the schools are seldom answered, or, if answered, are dealt with in such a manner as to cause controversy. Budgets and bond issues are frequently turned down by the voters.

Superior

The board maintains contact, through its meetings and by the appointment of citizens committees when necessary and desirable, with the thinking of all segments of the community. Parent-teacher organizations in particular, and citizens in general, are encouraged to be actively interested in education and the improvement of the schools. Petitions and complaints are considered thoughtfully and with dispatch, and the staff and the community are promptly informed of resulting decisions. Reasons are always given when it is necessary to reject petitions from special-interest groups or recommendations of citizens committees. Public hearings are held before action is taken on matters of extreme public interest and importance.

☐ Inferior	☐ Below average	☐ Average	☐ Above average	☐ Superior

Action Needed To Close the Gap

SOURCE: *Profiles of Excellence: Recommended Criteria for Evaluating the Quality of a Local School System*, p. 44. Copyright 1966 National Education Association.

NOTE: *Profiles of Excellence* is a 128-page book of "instruments" designed to encourage a comprehensive self-study and evaluation by local school boards, administrators, and professional associations of their school system's total operation. Copies are available from NEA Publication-Sales, 1201 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Single copy: $1; discounts on quantity orders.

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EPS/NSBA File: KN

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

Individuals or groups often confront a single board member with issues which usually should be handled by the Superintendent of Schools. In such cases, the board member should withhold commitment and/or opinion until the matter has been presented to the whole Board of Education during official session. It is often wise for a board member to postpone forming an opinion until he has had the benefit of hearing the issue discussed by the Board where all aspects of the problem are aired. A board member should not obligate other members of the Board by predicting how they will vote.

In carrying out the policy for the handling of complaints the Board will, therefore, observe the following procedure:

Neither the Board as a whole nor any individual member will entertain or consider communications or complaints from teachers, parents, or patrons, until they have first been referred to the Superintendent of Schools.

Only in those cases where satisfactory adjustment cannot be made by the Superintendent and his assistants shall communications and complaints be referred to the Board.

After hearing evidence submitted by the Superintendent, in such event, the Board will, if it deems advisable, grant a hearing to the parties interested.

Such hearing will be held during official session of the Board.

SOURCE: School District #1, Helena, Mont.
DATE: 1966

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PUBLIC COMPLAINTS
(NEA Resolution on Extremism and the Schools)

The National Education Association is alarmed at the nationwide attack on the public schools and the teaching profession by extremist organizations. The growing opposition to certain curriculums and to educational policies is recognized by the Association as a thinly veiled political attack on public education itself. The Association urges its affiliates to take concerned action and, if necessary, legal action to defend against such irresponsible attacks.

SOURCE: Resolution 70-19 of the National Education Association
DATE: July, 1970

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PUBLIC COMPLAINTS
(Ways to Combat Undemocratic Pressures on PTA's, Schools, and Libraries)

In the PTA. Appoint a committee to become informed on extremist groups, their "front organizations," and their tactics.

* Devote a meeting to a factual report by the committee on extremist groups; their efforts to infiltrate PTA's and influence them to withdraw from the state and national organizations; and their undemocratic pressures on schools and libraries.

* Establish the policy that resolutions and motions on controversial issues will not be voted on until the meeting following their introduction. This assures that the membership can be alerted and all views on an issue can be fairly represented and heard.

* If someone comes up with a loaded, unanswerable question, ask him to rephrase it. Usually he can't, because it's a "canned" question.

* Never mislay your sense of humor. A humorous remark has more than once pricked an inflated balloon.

* Set a definite, reasonable time for adjournment. This assures that decisions will not be made by an extremist minority that outstays the moderate majority.

* Look gift speakers in the mouth. Find out why they want to speak and whom they represent.

* Keep the community and the press supplied with facts about PTA purposes and projects.

Schools. Urge school boards to do the following:

* Have written statements of policy placing responsibility for curriculum decisions and selection of textbooks, films, pamphlets, and other teaching materials with teachers and educational administrative officials.

* Have an information program to sustain community understanding of these policies.

* Have clearly defined procedures for dealing with complaints on curriculum, books, and teachers. For example, require that charges and complaints be made in writing and signed by the complainant, referred to a special committee, and so on.

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Libraries. Urge library boards also to have written policies on book selection; a public education program; and definite procedures for handling complaints.

Prepare in Advance...

* Invite representatives from schools, churches, libraries, labor, industry, press, radio, and TV to a meeting to consider sound, democratic ways of dealing with extremist pressures.

* Establish a joint committee for a continuing exchange of information and ideas.

* Conduct a joint, vigorous education campaign to make the community aware of the importance of freedom of speech and freedom to read, to teach, and to learn.

If an attack comes...

* Bring it out in the open.

* Insist that charges and complaints be specific, written, documented, and signed.

* Ask the school board or library board to hold public hearings.

* Get full press, radio, and TV coverage.

* Seek advice and help from the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, your state congress, and from such groups as the state education association, the National Education Association, the American Library Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Teachers of Social Studies, and local and state colleges and universities.

SOURCE: From a leaflet entitled Extremist Groups: A Clear and Present Danger to Freedom and Democracy. Published by and available from the National Council of Parents and Teachers, 700 North Rush St., Chicago, Ill. 60611, @ 15¢ per copy.

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COMPLAINTS ABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The Regional School District #13 Board of Education, though it is finally responsible for all book purchases, recognizes the student's right of free access to many different types of books. The board also recognizes the right of teachers and administrators to select books and other materials in accord with current trends in education and to make them available in the schools. It is therefore the policy of the Regional School District #13 Board of Education to require the materials selected for our schools to be in accord with the following:

1. Books and other reading matter shall be chosen for values of interest and enlightenment of all students in the community. A book shall not be excluded because of the race, nationality, political, or religious views of the writer or of its style and language.

2. Every effort will be made to provide materials that present all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times, international, national, and local, and books or other reading matter of sound factual authority shall not be prescribed or removed from library shelves or classrooms because of partisan, doctrinal approval or disapproval.

3. Censorship of books shall be challenged in order to maintain the school's responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

In accordance with No. 3 above, the Board of Education has adopted the following policy when dealing with censorship of books or other materials:

1. That the final decision for controversial reading matter shall rest with the Board of Education after careful examination and discussion of the book or reading matter with school officials or anyone else the Board may wish to involve.

2. That no parent or group of parents has the right to determine the reading matter for students other than their own children.

3. The Board does, however, recognize the right of an individual parent to request that his child not have to read a given book, provided a written request is made to the appropriate building principal.

4. Any parent who wishes to request reconsideration of the use of any book in the school must make such a request in writing on forms provided through building principals.

SOURCE: Regional School District #13, Durham, Conn.
DATE: 1969

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EPS/NSBA File: KNBA-R

COMPLAINTS ABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

It is recognized that opinions differ concerning appropriateness of instructional materials. Occasionally an individual or group may find instructional materials used in the Tacoma Public Schools in conflict with their views. Therefore, in accordance with provisions of the Instructional Materials Act, the following procedures have been established "to provide a system for receiving, considering and acting upon written complaints regarding instructional materials" used by the Tacoma School District.

Filing of Complaints. All complaints must be presented in writing to the building principal....The statement must be signed and identified in such a way that a proper reply will be possible. [Tacoma uses form KNBA reproduced in this kit.] When a complaint is received by a principal, he will acknowledge its receipt and answer any questions regarding procedure. The principal will then notify the Administrator for Elementary or Secondary Education, the department chairman, and the teacher or teachers involved. The Administrator for Elementary or Secondary Education will determine whether the complaint should be considered an individual request or if a building or district level review committee should be activated to reevaluate the material.

Procedure for Individual Request. An individual student may be excused from using challenged materials after the parent or guardian has completed the Citizen's Request form. The teacher will then assign the student alternate materials of equal merit.

Building Review Committee. The building level review committee shall be under the direction of the Administrator for Elementary or Secondary Education and composed of the building principal and four or more members selected by him from school or district personnel directly concerned.

District Review Committee. The district level review committee shall be under the direction of the Deputy Superintendent and composed of the Administrator for Elementary or Secondary Education, and five or more members selected by the Administrator for Elementary or Secondary Education from the administrative and instructional areas directly concerned.

Materials Pend[illegible] Reevaluation. The use of challenged materials by class, school, or district shall not be restricted until final disposition has been made by the appropriate review committee. Individuals may be excused from using challenged materials according to the Procedure for Individual Request (above).

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Committee Review Procedures. In the deliberation; of challenged materials, the committee shall consider the educational philosophy of the school district, the professional opinions of other teachers of the same subject and of other competent authorities, reviews of the materials by reputable bodies, the teacher's own stated objectives in using the materials, and the objections of the complainant.

Publication of Findings. The findings of the Building Review Committee and/or District Review Committee shall be a matter of written record and transmitted to the Deputy Superintendent and the Administrator for Elementary or Secondary Education who will determine how interested parties shall be notified.

SOURCE: Tacoma School District #10, Tacoma, Wash.
DATE: 1/13/69

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COMPLAINTS ABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
(Suggested Strategy for Resisting Censorship)

If an attack does come, remember the following:

1. Remain calm. Don't confuse noise with substance. Most attacks come from small groups of people who have little community backing. Time after time the American people have shown that, given the facts, they will back solidly the responsible exercise of professional freedom by teachers and librarians and that they will insist on protecting their own freedom to read. Insist on the deliberate handling of the complaint under previously established rules. Treat complainants with dignity, courtesy, and good humor.

2. Take immediate steps to assure that the full facts surrounding a complaint are known to the administration. The school librarian should go through the principal to the superintendent and the school board; the public librarian, to the board of trustees or to the appropriate community administration official; the college or university librarian, to the president and through him to the board of trustees. Full, written information should be presented, giving the nature of the problem or complaint and identifying the source.

3. Seek the support of the local press immediately. The freedom to read and the freedom of the press go hand in hand.

4. Inform local civic organizations of the facts and enlist their support where possible.

5. Defend the principles of the freedom to read and the professional responsibility of teachers and librarians rather than the individual book. The laws governing obscenity, subversive material, and other questionable matter are subject to interpretation by the courts. The responsibility for removal of any book from public access should rest with this established process. The responsibility for the use of books in the schools must rest with those responsible for the educatonal objectives being served.

6. The ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee and other appropriate national and state committees concerned with intellectual freedom should be informed of the nature of the problem. Even though each effort at censorship must be met at the local level, there is often value in the support and assistance of agencies outside the area which have no personal involvement. They often can cite parallel cases and suggest methods of meeting an attack. Similar aid in cases affecting the use of books in the schools can be obtained from the Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities of the National Education Association.

SOURCE: The Council of the American Library Association
DATE: 1962

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COMPLAINTS ABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

CITIZEN'S REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF A BOOK

Author **Hardcover** **Paperback**

Title

Publisher (if known)

Request initiated by _____

Telephone _____ **Address** _____ **City** _____

Complainant represents: _____**himself** _____

_____**(name organization)** _____

_____**(identify other group)** _____

1. To what in the book do you object? (Please be specific; cite pages)

_____

_____

_____

2. What do you feel might be the result of reading this book?

_____

_____

3. For what age group would you recommend this book? _____

4. Is there anything good about this book? _____

_____

5. Did you read the entire book? _____ **What Parts?** _____

_____

6. Are you aware of the judgment of this book by literary critics? _____

_____

7. What do you believe is the theme of this book? _____

_____

8. What would you like the library to do about this book?

_____ **do not assign it to students.**

_____ **withdraw it from all patrons of the library.**

_____**refer it to the Library Board for re-evaluation.**

9. In its place, what book of equal literary quality would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of our civilization? _____

_____

_____

_____

Signature of Complainant

NOTE: Variations of this form, originally developed and disseminated by the National Council of Teachers of English, appear in the policy manuals of many hundreds of school districts across the United States.

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EPS/NSBA File: KNBA

COMPLAINTS ABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
(Social Studies)

A diversity of points of view is essential to education in a democracy....Therefore, it is incumbent upon every school administrator and social studies teacher to be vigilant in detecting encroachments upon diversity of viewpoints in the classroom and to be prepared to challenge successfully such threats.

It is recognized that citizens of a community have the right to examine and criticize school materials. In order to assist school personnel in handling complaints concerning social studies materials, procedures based on due process are recommended.

A Suggested Procedure for Handling Complaints Concerning Social Studies Materials

1. All criticisms or challenges of materials should be received courteously. The critic should be thanked for his or her interest in the education of the community's children. The name of the complainant should be requested.

2. If the complainant identifies himself, he should then be informed that a procedure has been established and a "Request for Reconsideration of Materials" form [sample form attached] must be completed and submitted. A form letter outlining the school policy should be available with a "Request" form attached. The need for obtaining specific information should be emphasized as essential to a speedy resolution of the complaint or the problem.

3. After the written complaint is formally received, a responsible administrator should consult with the teacher concerned, check the material, and make a judgment. The official position of the school should be explained to all parties concerned.

4. If the administrator feels that there may be a serious public reaction or that there is some validity to the complaint, a committee should be formed to study and consider the formal complaint. At this point, the teacher and the complainant should be invited to participate in the committee meetings. It is advisable to create a standing committee to investigate complaints.

5. If the committee report does not end the criticism, the superintendent should be appraised of the situation and urged to issue a statement in the defense of the committee decision.

(See Overleaf)

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Suggested Request Form For Reconsideration of Social Studies Materials

Type of material (book, film, pamphlet, etc.): _____

Title of material: _____

Author (if known): _____

Publisher: _____

Date of Publication: _____

Request initiated by (name, address, phone number): _____

_____

Do you have a child in the school concerned? ____ Yes; ____ No.

Complainant represents: ____ Himself
____ Organization--name
____ Other group--identify

1. To what in the material do you object? (Please be specific. Cite words, pages, and nature of content): _____

_____

2. Why do you object to this material? _____

_____

3. Are you acquainted with the range of materials being used in the school system on this general topic? _____
4. Do you approve of presenting a diversity of points of view in the classroom? _____
5. What would you like your school to do about this material?
   ___ Do not expose or assign it to my child.
   ___ Withdraw it from all students as well as my child.
   ___ Send it back to the appropriate school department for reevaluation.
   ___ Other (explain).

Signature of Complainant: _____
Date: _____

SOURCE: From an advisory of the Board of Directors, National Council for the Social Studies
DATE: 1967

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COMPLAINTS ABOUT SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Constructive criticism of the schools is welcome through whatever medium when it is motivated by a sincere desire to improve the quality of the education program and to equip the schools of this district to their task more effectively.

The Board places trust in its employees and desires to support their actions in such a manner that employees are freed from unnecessary, spiteful, or negative criticism and complaints.

Whenever a complaint is made directly to the Board as a whole or to a Board member as an individual, it shall be referred to the school administration for study and possible solutions. The individual employee involved shall be advised of the nature of the complaint and shall be given every opportunity for explanation, comment, and presentation of the facts as he sees them.

If it appears necessary, the administration, the person who made the complaint, or the employee involved may request an executive session of the Board for the purposes of fuller study and a decision by this body. Generally all parties involved, including the school administration, shall be asked to attend such a meeting for the purposes of presenting additional facts, making further explanations, and clarifying the issues. Heresay and rumor shall be discounted as well as emotional feelings except those directly related to the facts of the situation.

The Board shall conduct such meetings in as fair and just a manner as possible. The Board may request a disinterested third party to act as moderator to help it reach a mutually satisfactory solution.

Any parent, guardian, or other person who upbraids, insults, or abuses any teacher on school property or in the presence of pupils shall be prosecuted by the district under the provisions of school law.

SOURCE: Special School District #1, Minneapolis, Minn.
LEGAL REF.: Educ. Code - 123.35, Subd. 6

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EPS/NSBA File: KND

COMPLAINTS ABOUT SCHOOL PERSONNEL

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION DESIRES TO SUPPORT ITS STAFF AGAINST ANY OR ALL CHARGES, BE THEY DIRECT OR INDIRECT, MADE IN A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD BEFORE PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE....

The Board of Education realizes its function as a public agency and this policy and its implementing rules are in no way intended to restrict the right of the public to be heard. This policy and its rules have been adopted to guarantee an orderly process wherein all parties are dealt with fairly and in accord with due process.

SOURCE: Board of Education, Santa Barbara, Calif.
DATE: 7/20/67
LEGAL REF.: Government Code 54950-54960

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EPS/NSBA File: KND-R

COMPLAINTS ABOUT SCHOOL PERSONNEL

It is recommended that a charge or complaint be directed to the person, school, or department most immediately involved with the problem. All efforts shall be made to reach a satisfactory conclusion on this level.

However, if a person feels it is necessary, anyone may present to the Board of Education a charge or complaint against an identifiable employee or against a specific school or office in a public Board meeting where the basis for the charge or complaint arises out of the personal actions or omissions of an identifiable employee. The presentation of such charge or complaint shall be subject to the following procedures:

1. Any such charge or complaint shall be made in writing and shall be sworn to by the person or persons submitting it. The Secretary-Clerk of the Board will advise, if requested, as to the methods of swearing to the truth of the charge or complaint.

2. No such charge or complaint may be orally presented in a meeting of the Board of Education or of any of its special committees except as in #3 below.

3. The sworn, written statement of the charge or complaint shall be submitted to the Secretary-Clerk of the Board of Education who shall present it to the Board of Education, or to an appropriate committee as determined by the Board of Education, in a closed meeting (executive session). The Board of Education, if it deems advisable, may allow the person swearing to the truth of the statement to appear before the Board of Education, or its appropriate committee, in a closed meeting (executive session) and to present orally the charge or complaint.

4. The Board of Education or its appropriate committee, will review, and if necessary investigate, the charge or complaint, and will respond in writing to the person who has submitted the written statement.

5. In the event this procedure is not known or followed, the President of the Board of Education shall terminate the right of the speaker at the point the charge or use of the staff member's name is brought into the speaker's presentation in a public Board meeting, or at the first indication that the speaker intends to speak against a staff member in such a meeting. The speaker shall immediately be told the reason for terminating his right to speak, and shall be informed of the proper steps to follow in registering his complaint.

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EPS/NSBA File: KND-R

6. In the event that an individual registers a charge or complaint with a member of the Board of Education in person or by telephone, that Board member shall usually refer the matter to the Superintendent for investigation. When anyone registers a charge or complaint with the Superintendent, he shall investigate that charge or complaint by tracing it to the source in the school or department concerned, and then shall report his findings to the complainant or Board member.

SOURCE: Board of Education, Santa Barbara, Calif.
DATE: 7/20/67
LEGAL REF.: Government Code 54950-54960

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PUBLIC HEARINGS

Interested or affected persons shall be afforded an opportunity to be heard informally before the District Superintendent or his delegated administrative official. If necessary, a hearing before the Board may be granted.

The following procedures shall be followed by the Board whenever large delegations come before it requesting a hearing regarding a critical issue being decided by the Board:

1. Position of the Board stated: After the meeting has been officially opened, the President of the Board shall briefly state the position of the Board and give reasons therefore. If official action on the issue has not as yet been taken, the President may so state and may summarize briefly the arguments for and against the issue to be decided. Other members of the Board may also be heard at this time.

2. Speakers for and against the issue: The Clerk of the Board shall secure the names of all those persons wishing to be heard before the Board. Those desiring to speak shall indicate whether they are for or against the issue involved. Persons not responding to the Clerk's request shall not be heard.

   The President may set a reasonable time limit for each speaker.

3. Board to answer questions: After the speakers for and against the issue have been heard, the President shall indicate that questions pertaining directly to the issue involved may be directed to the Board.

4. Action by the Board: Upon a ruling by the President closing the public discussion the Board may proceed with its deliberations and take whatever action it deems advisable.

The Board may at any hearing by a majority vote take the issue under submission and continue the hearing from time to time but not for a period of more than 60 days from the date of the next regular meeting of the Board.

SOURCE: ABC Unified School District, Artesia, Calif.
DATES: 1/15/68; 3/4/65

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INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA CENTERS
(Library Bill of Rights for School Media Center Programs)

The American Association of School Librarians reaffirms its belief in the Library Bill of Rights of the American Library Association. Media personnel are concerned with generating understanding of American freedoms through the development of informed and responsible citizens. To this end the American Association of School library media center is:

To provide a comprehensive collection of instructional materials selected in compliance with basic written selection principles, and to provide maximum accessibility to these materials.

To provide materials that will support the curriculum, taking into consideration the individual's needs, and the varied interests, abilities, socio-economic backgrounds, and maturity levels of the students served.

To provide materials for teachers and students that will encourage growth in knowledge, and that will develop literary, cultural and aesthetic appreciation, and ethical standards.

To provide materials which reflect the ideas and beliefs of religious, social, political, historical, and ethnic groups and their contribution to the American and world heritage and culture, thereby enabling students to develop an intellectual integrity in forming judgments.

To provide a written statement, approved by the local Board of Education, of the procedures for meeting the challenge of censorship of materials in school library media centers.

To provide qualified professional personnel to serve teachers and students.

SOURCE: American Association of School Librarians
DATE: 1970

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EPS/NSBA File: IAA

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The National Education Association believes that academic and professional freedom are essential to the teaching profession. Controversial issues should be a part of instructional programs when judgment of the professional staff deems the issues appropriate to the curriculum and to the maturity level of the student. Academic freedom is the right of the learner and his teachers to explore, present, and discuss divergent points of view in the quest for knowledge and truth.

Professional freedom includes the teacher's right to evaluate, to criticize, and to advocate his personal point of view concerning the policies and programs of the schools. The teacher also has the right to assist colleagues when their academic or professional freedom is violated.

SOURCE: Resolution C-37 of the National Education Association
DATE: Reaffirmed July, 1970

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For further reading...

° Meeting Censorship in the School: A Series of Case Studies. Episodes of attempted efforts to ban books and how schools responded to these attacks. National Council of Teachers of English, 508 South Sixth St., Champaign, Ill. 61820. 1967. 54pp.

° Looking in on Your Schools: Questions to Guide PTA Fact Finders. A useful handout booklet to encourage responsible public inquiries about school programs. National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 700 North Rush St., Chicago, Ill. 60611. 1958. 31pp.

° Freedom to Learn and Freedom to Teach. The complete text of the Wilmington, Del., policy and procedures described in the introductory remarks of this kit. Director of Publications, Wilmington Public Schools, Wilmington, Del. 19801. 1965. 12pp.

° "Understanding Today's Pressure Groups" in School Board Briefing Paper, February, 1970. A four-page background paper offering a typology on today's school critics, responsible and otherwise. Inquire from the Editor, Croft Board Service, 100 Garfield Ave., New London, Conn. 06320.

° The War on Sex Education: A Survival Kit for School Boards. A reprint of a series of articles which originally appeared in The American School Board Journal. Reader Service Dept., ASBJ, State National Bank Plaza, Evanston, Ill. 60201. 1970. 16 pp. Price: 1-5 copies @ $1.25; 6 or more copies @ $1.00.

° Policies That Support Better School Public Relations (#70-27). A companion publication of the kit you are now reading. EPS/NSBA Clearinghouse, 154 Cross Rd., Box 92, Waterford, Conn. 06385. 1970. 26pp. See inside front cover of this kit for price information.

Also...

Inquire about the publications of the NEA's Commission of Professional Rights and Responsibilities, which is organized (among other purposes) to defend teachers against unjust attack. One of its most recent publications is a 40-page booklet of "strategies" entitled Suggestions for Defense Against Extremist Attack: Sex Education in the Public Schools. Address: 1201 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.